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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0136  
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1726  
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CENTCOM FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: CDR USCENTCOM: LOOKING FOR MIL-MIL REENGAGEMENT

Classified By: P/E Chief Ted Burkhalter; resons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: Visiting USCENTCOM Commander Admiral William J. Fallon met January 24 jointly with the National Security Advisor, Defense Minister, Foreign Minister and Chairman of the Border Guards of the National Security Service. The meeting, which immediately preceded one with Uzbek President Karimov, covered Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, regional security organizations and political blocs, U.S.-Uzbek military-to-military reengagement, and U.S. concerns on human rights and political reform. The Uzbek side raised Andijon, and the Defense Minister privately offered to share details of the internal Uzbek investigation. On Afghanistan, the Uzbeks expressed concern about a resurgent Taliban and skepticism about the effectiveness of Coalition efforts in the north and northeast. End summary.

Regional security/political/ and economic blocs  
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12. (C) National Security Advisor Murod Ataev took the lead in the discussions. He said it was not Uzbekistan which had initiated the downturn in relations with the U.S. Rather, Uzbekistan remained interested in improving relations gradually. Admiral Fallon began with the regional situation, and asked about Uzbek participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Ataev and Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov reaffirmed Uzbek policy on the SCO. Uzbekistan does not, according to both men, want to see SCO used as a political/military bloc and for this reason sent only observers to Russian-initiated 2007 military exercises. Ataev acknowledged that SCO retains an important security dimension, particularly in fighting terrorism, extremism and narcotics, but underscored its role in economic development and cooperation. Ataev said that Uzbekistan views regional groupings, including the Common Security Treaty Organization

(CSTO), Eurasec, and the SCO as components of its consistent approach to regional stability.

#### Counter-terrorism and Afghanistan

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¶3. (C) Ataev, who served as a KGB officer in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, recounted Uzbekistan's cooperation with the United States in the early days of the U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan, he said, had excellent cooperation with the CIA and DOD, providing intelligence and allowing use of its territory for unmanned drones and other activities. Defense Minister Ruslan Mirzaev added that underlying continuing Uzbek support for NATO operations is the realization that terrorism knows no borders. He said, though, that the Uzbek government is increasingly concerned with the growth of the Taliban and their expansion in the north and northeast. He said they are well prepared and are successfully employing suicide bombings and guerilla tactics. He opposed recent proposals to arm tribal elements outside the Afghan army.

¶4. (C) Admiral Fallon agreed with the Uzbek assessment that security has both military and political aspects. He underscored the need, however, to ensure that military efforts to provide physical security succeeded and urged the Uzbeks not to waver in their support of NATO efforts. Foreign Minister Norov said that for the time being Uzbekistan continues to support those efforts. He said, however, that in the Uzbek view ISAF and OEF are having very limited effect against the Taliban.

#### Counter-narcotics

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¶5. (C) NSA Ataev said that Afghan drugs do not cross the Uzbek-Afghan borders, which are very secure, but rather transit Tajikistan. He noted that traffickers use the same routes as in the Soviet period. Admiral Fallon, in response, underscored the transnational nature of the drug problem and acknowledged Uzbek counter-narcotics efforts. He urged increased regional and U.S.-Uzbek bilateral cooperation.

#### Increasing mil-to-mil engagement

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¶6. (C) Defense Minister Mirzaev ran through a checklist of prior U.S.-Uzbek engagement: infantry and airborne training, medical services, air force training, computer training, simulation modules, psychological operations, explosives detection, search and rescue, and emergency situations. Admiral Fallon and he agreed that we should work toward enhanced cooperation via the agreed CENTCOM engagement plan. The Uzbeks repeatedly stated that they are ready.

#### Human rights do matter

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¶7. (C) Admiral Fallon twice raised the issue of human rights, saying that a discussion on the topic must occur. A more normal relationship was in the interests of both countries, and dialogue on this topic was part of such a relationship. Congressional concerns about this topic indicate its overall importance. (Note: Ataev nodded in understanding at this. End note.) Admiral Fallon underscored the need for cooperation to achieve increased transparency in the political process and improvement on human rights. With such cooperation, it will be possible to move toward a normal relationship, and it was important to do so in order to get on with our cooperation in areas of common interest.

#### Andijon

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¶8. (C) Ataev, after lambasting the Department of State and Congress for playing the spoiler in otherwise fruitful Uzbek relations with CIA and DOD, raised the issue of Andijon. He acknowledged that it was a tragedy ("it is our history and

our pain") but defended the Government of Uzbekistan against accusations that it had intentionally slaughtered innocents. "Imagine if someone had tried to set up a caliphate in Luxembourg or Kosovo," he said -- the reaction would have been the same. Uzbekistan was the victim of an "information war," which led to a downturn in U.S. - Uzbek relations. The Defense Minister later privately offered to share with Ambassador details of the Uzbek internal investigation into Andijon.

19. (U) CENTCOM has cleared this cable.  
NORLAND